

WITHIN TENSIONS

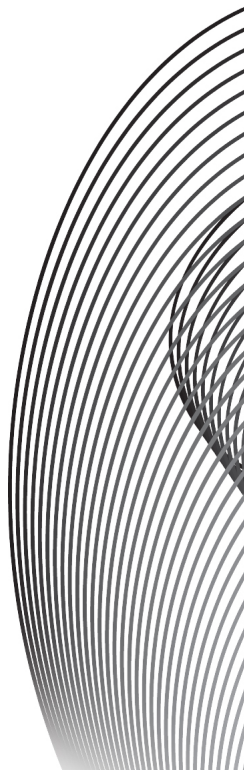


vol.8

PERSONA



WITHINTENSIONS



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PERSONA



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We at Withintensions want to acknowledge that our work takes place on the unceded territories of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), and Səlilwətał (Tseil-Waututh) peoples. We want to recognize that these lands belong to the Indigenous peoples who have lived here far before the arrival of settlers. We also want to push beyond land acknowledgements to further encourage acts of reconciliation. Recognition is great but it is nowhere near where we need to be. Reconciliation is comprehensive and takes more than an acknowledgment for occupying land. We always support marginalised peoples right to protest.



Aidan Branch, *Prosthesis: A Real Allegory Summing Up Seven Months of My Artistic and Moral Life* (2020)

Prosthesis : A Real Allegory Summing Up Seven Months of My Artistic and Moral Life (2020)

Aidan Branch

A Narcissistic Interview:

Aidan 1: Okay, what first? Leo rising, or aquarius mercury?

Aidan 2: Either way I need some sort of validation. I've found talking to people wonderful but tiring in the past. I always need some sort of disguise to go out in public and I prefer to contradict myself. So, aqua mercury.

Aidan 1: I'm wondering if there is any distinction between loneliness as a singular consequence of exhaustion or as a shared condition of isolation?

Aidan 2: It's tough finding yourself slipping into defensive fronts when you're all alone, putting on that borrowed face, that public protection, who am I even hiding from? My looks have always been cherry picked pastiches, lazy air quotes and second hand garments I pass off as being older than they really are. Bilal Khbeiz said "the practice of modern living is toilsome", so much time is spent masking that you even have a body.

Aidan 1: You haven't answered the question.

Aidan 2: Well, I want a reply but I haven't even asked a question before today. Talking, like any performance, takes practice. Talking with yourself is a bit twee, isn't it? The annoying thing about books, streaming, and pictures is they don't wink back at you when you smile at them.

Aidan 1: In mapping myself inside all these references to other people, I'm amazed how often I forget I could appear in somebody else's vision. Recognising that you are alone but that loneliness is a state shared with so many other people - there has to be some difference.

Aidan 2: We're a bunch of self-obsessed wankers aren't we? This is going to look terrible if anybody else sees this.

(After writing this costar told me "are you worrying about how other people see you" and that I should do "dumb jokes". I feel validated.)

Exploit (2019)

Victoria Mulja

Exploit is a video work that was showcased during SFU's Spring 2019 BFA Graduating Exhibition. I was interested in how video games can be incorporated into art practice. I have chosen the game ROBLOX because of its rapid popularity and my experiences of playing the game myself.

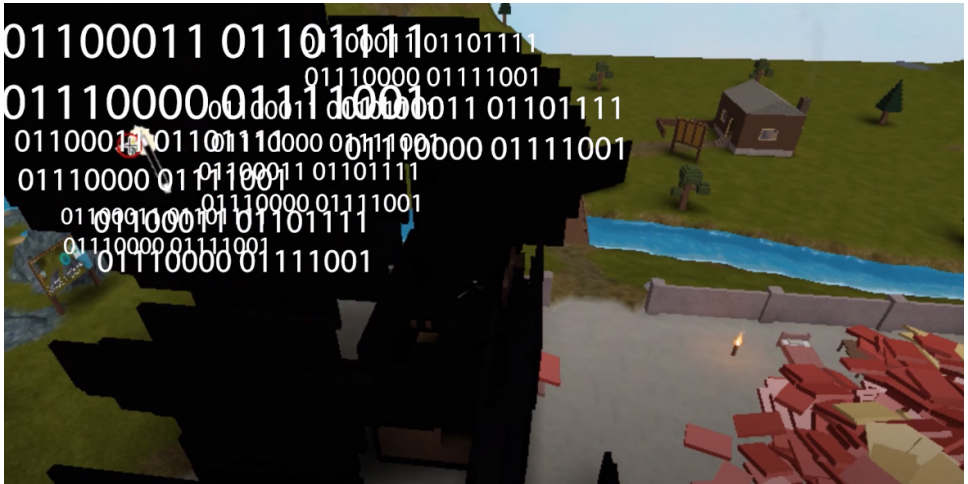
ROBLOX, a massive multiplayer online building game, has received criticism from players about the excessive amount of “exploiters” who ruin the fun by altering the user-generated parts of the game to their advantage.

In Exploit, I take on the role of a mysterious exploiter who alters a starter game. When a part gets deleted or copied, binary code is left behind as a trace from the Exploiter. Binary code is a coding system that uses zeros and ones to represent a letter, number, or other characters in a computer/electronic device. The binary code represents what the character is going through while destroying and manipulating a game.

My interest in video games has led to the exploration of breaking game expectations by not following the main objectives and rules that a game is designed to do. The making of Exploit has given me a better understanding of how video games can be used as a medium in art.



Victoria Mulja, *Exploit* (2019) Stills from video



Victoria Mulja, *Exploit* (2019) Stills from video



The World Revolves Around Me

Opal Mclean

All **my** writing somehow revolves around **my** childhood. Reflecting on the past becomes the only means to change. Without examining **my** life, **I** cannot figure out how to continue into the future. It becomes a guideline for what (not) to do as **I** continue trying to form some resemblance of a successful life.

My tone almost signals that **I** am toward the end although **I** know **I**'m only at the beginning. **I** think this comes from the end of **my** childhood. There is no real moment that can define the end of childhood for a person but, with every passing day, **I** find **myself** further away from **my** inner child. It's as if **I** have left her behind in order to pursue what she never could.

My younger self becomes a weight that **I** carry with **me**. Sometimes, it's comforting; remembering what it was like to run barefoot through **my** old neighborhood with the friends **I** thought **I**'d have forever. It reminds **me** to live in

the moment without a care in the world. Other times, I remember the hardships that taught **me** to stand up and stay strong. The moments that seemed so huge at the time but make **me** shake **my** head right now.

This is how I grapple with who I am. **My** ideal self, or **my** ideal persona as I see it, is somewhere between who I am and who I want to be. She exists somewhere between **my** childhood self and **my** aging self. Someone who sees the wonder in the world while still achieving a greater goal. I guess that means **my** persona is formed from both decisions and happenings. I get to choose who I am until I cannot anymore. This is where **my** persona becomes a genuine encounter with **myself**. The two function in different ways but interact to form **my** personality. A messy mix of who I really am and how others see **me**.

Vapourwave.Cage (2020)

Vapourwave.Cage

Vapourwave.Cage is a digital collage project where vapourwave and Nicolas Cage are the only limitations placed on the work, which I began back in May during the initial lockdown. The theme of Persona is central to what the project explores - so much of the imagery's success and humour can be dependent on the cult status of Nicolas Cage and his persona. It can also enhance the message or just warp everything into a surreal scenario. Nicolas Cage can bring humour and/or intensity to a piece, but sometimes his role is merely as a helpful supporting character in a story much bigger than him.

The work really plays with his eccentricities, exploring the weird ways that life can become so surreal it mimics art and vice versa. As you'll see, some of my own politics and background bleed into the work too. which also feels cathartic because on one hand, I love Nicolas Cage, but his cop-worship, among other things, are problematic, and I love to subvert that aspect of his persona.



Vapourwave.Cage, *Astana at Night* (2020)



Vapourwave.Cage, *Leave Me and My Globe Alone* (2020)



Vapourwave.Cage, *Like, Totally* (2020)



Vapourwave.Cage, You Got That Right, Dad! (2020)

Cluttered Subconscious

Natalie Chan

I wondered (when contemplating persona), where it fit into my own line of art practice - there tends to be a kind of guarding of self I partake in without realizing, in reference to the amount of time it takes me to decide what to portray to the audience and create a composed idea, a perfect sentence

I think, working in collage frees myself in a way there's a rhythm in cutting out the forms I find, in choosing the colours I like,



Natalie Chan, *Untitled* (2020) old magazine and calendar clippings, tape, glue, nail polish

without worrying
about what the end
idea is meant to be
the process becomes
inherently intertwined
with the actions of
crafting a persona,
taking pre-existing
parts and juxtaposing
them together to
present something
that wasn't there
before (even when I'm
not sure what that
"something" is)

even when I may
not be able to fully
articulate the thought
process behind the
choices made
the choices made,
they speak for me



Natalie Chan, *Untitled* (2020) old magazine and
calendar clippings, tape, glue, nail polish

CRISIS COLLECTION (2020)

Sylvia Burtenshaw

Experiencing, interpreting and responding to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, CRISIS COLLECTION 2020: Utility-wear for the fictional self (Pandemic Androgeny) is a project made in isolation, using myself, my partner and our limited space as figures/settings within this work. Using the aesthetics of medicalized garments, workwear, and pop culture dystopias, CRISIS COLLECTION is a magazine spread for an imagined clothing line/ pandrogenous persona. The pages are composed of texts from Breyer P-Orridge assembled with photos modelling hand-sewn utilitarian clothing from fabrics and objects available in my home. Each installment shows a different home item/material reinterpreted into items of clothing. Limiting my resources to fabrics already in my home operates both to reflect on this situation of material scarcity/limited accessibility and to exaggerate the existential questions living in self isolation produces. By taking in the materials of objects and furnitures around us, we begin to not only personify the objects that surround us, but to replace them— forming a third entity which is neither furniture nor individuals, but a Pandrogyne of domestic subjects. The visual language of a fashion lookbook/magazine subverts qualities of fashion and dress such as individuality, expression, identity; in changing the balance between our relationships with each other, our selves, and our home, we've dressed in uniforms, homogenized, pandrogenized.

View *CRISIS COLLECTION* (2020) [Here](#)

CRISIS COLLECTION

2020

UTILITY-WEAR FOR THE
FICTIONAL SELF
(PANDEMIC ANDROGENY)



BED SHEET

In the beginning ALL were perfect.
 The first man was the first woman.
 The first woman was the first man.
 UNTIL the whispering began...
 AND/DNA the first man became the first man
 The first woman became the first woman
 AND/DNA then all HELL let loose
 AND/DNA we've been living (t)here ever SIN-ce
 Know matter HOW sin-cerely...
 We are ultra-genetic terrorists.
 One man is another man or woman.
 EVERY MAN AND WOMAN IS A MAN AND WOMAN
 There is a time and place for everything indecent.
 Redesign yourself.
 YOUR SELF.
 End your social and sexual misery, taste
 the sweet electricity of PANDROGENY!

AREA RUG

A N D R O G Y N E

We both subsume our
separate bodies
individuality and ego to an ongoing and substantially
irreversible process of cutting up the identity to pro-
duce a third being, an other entity that we call the

P A N D R O G Y N E





PATIO CHAIR

R E - U N I O N

We are not trying to look our best, or even look better
We were happy with our bodies
as they were in terms of that,
The practise of becoming two parts of one
new being that exists more fully when we
are physically together is our objective



BENCH SEAT

Jolted, deafened by the racket of meaningless gestures we are built
by parents, schools, corporations, pop media feedback loops,
m i m i c k i n g
our idols, the fame whisperers, the para-medics of character.
Culture, like a monstrous, relentless Cathedral Engine rolls us
flat and colourless grey

REMAIN ALIVE!

Remain alive.

Never before has a

generation, drowned in mortification, felt such a rage to live.

I Cannot Withdraw From My Own Experiences

Francisco Berlanga

The tree of life is an image that has become very common in Mexico, appearing in every size and colour in little shops ready for tourists. The image is of a tree scattered with moments in time depicted in its branches. The tree of life originated as a way of teaching the bible to natives in the early colonial period. Over time, it became adapted and transformed often depicting important moments in life – birth, marriage, death, and so on – and hung beside or behind these moments we see decorative plates and pots adorning the tree.

I don't know why these plates are present and I wonder what role they play. Are they to make the tree look more appealing? More Mexican? Or are they simply a result of the material restrictions of clay? What part of life are these plates meant to be? When I see plates like these hung neatly in the branches and they remind me of my grandmothers' kitchen, hung with plates that surely meant something at one time but are now just decoration.

I think of the moments in my life that I relate to my identity and there is often a plate, a pot, a new cooking device, an old technique that my mother teaches me. In these plates, I learn more than I did from the rest of the tree and I wonder if the plates are really what represent the life in the tree. Without the depictions of people, the plates still tell their stories. They speak of the domestic and remind us of family gatherings. They speak of labour and hours spent in the kitchen. They speak of culture and unique impractically heavy kitchen tools your parents brought from Mexico, but without them, it wouldn't taste the same.

The plates are the most important part for me so I bring them to the forefront, they are no longer an element of design but are stories in themselves. I wrote that I cannot withdraw from my own experiences and I know that's true because even if I tried the forgotten clay pots stained with years of use keep me tethered to them.



Francisco Berlanga, *I Cannot Withdraw From My Own Experiences* (2018) Acrylic, painted on the front of a Shawl



**Mark George,
Plague
portraits
series (2020)**

Erica Lapadat-
Janzen

Edited from a photo that Mark George sent me to be edited as part of the ongoing series I've been doing in 2020 during isolation. He sent me a mirror selfie nude that I edited in return for a handmade candle. I remember feeling an automatic twinge of irritation at being sent a nude over social media, but then inspiration struck and I quite enjoyed the meeting of the minds that resulted from the collaboration.



When you have more than just one **VOID (2018)**

Erica Lapadat-
Janzen

The original photo was taken by an ex-boyfriend photographer during an impromptu shoot in which I ended up having wine poured in my mouth in a bathtub. I edited the image so that the mouths look like gaping holes in my body, but also they serve to get by social media nudity standards.



AUDREY SHIU
 邵子晴

A.K.A GERBIL, SAKURA, KITTY, TIFFANY,
 ENERGIZER BUNNY,

Polaroid (2020)

Indian ink, watercolours

Audrey Shiu

This piece was made revolving around the definition of Persona: “the aspect of someone’s character that is presented to or perceived by others”, as well as my concepts of Persona: where descriptive words can be used to determine the “you”; where each word/phrase can be taken one at a time, selectively, or all at once. This is represented where I had written words that were repeatedly used to describe me, as well as key characteristics that I identified with. I am an amalgamation of these words, where they are all true, but some words may be truer than others that can be used to construct and perceive their version of ‘me’. Whatever words that are dominant depend on the person, creating a different persona.

I was also reminded of Jungian psychology, where the shadow (or the id) is the unconscious behaviour of the personality where the conscious ego does not identify. This is why I used the motif of the split face, “the mask” of the face that is perceived by others, and the shadowy, ambiguous imprint of the ‘inner’ face to represent my

perception of my own persona. The incomplete face can only be completed when I face myself in the mirror or is completed through others. In this case, the mask depends on the perception of the individual.

I decided to go with a polaroid like structure because of the nature of the polaroid itself. Where a snapshot is taken, and a picture is formed of that moment; and words are quickly inscribed to describe such a moment. Compared to a traditional photo where the photo is taken, processed through a series of events and after a period of time, only then can the photo of the person exist.

The lines are not drawn in a defined, smooth manner as the figure of the self can shift ever so slightly on the perception of others. The colours that I had chosen were used to represent 'me' (at least, at the moment), as I cannot identify my own 'aura', but I can get the impression of such through the words of others. The colours can be interpreted through a symbolic or

personal connotation. Some meanings range from Pink: for my love of pink, the combination of white and red (also representing the flag colours of Canada and Hong Kong), friendliness, compassion, my other persona as 'Sakura'. Blue for depth, wisdom, truth. Purple for creativity, mystery, magic, ambition.

Along with both my English and Chinese name, I had also put down the nicknames people use to refer to me. These nicknames are just as important as my names, as they were given by characteristics.

The persona of one is not fixed and, while one may appear dominant, there are many other personas that one projects towards others. These personas can be made through the perception of others, and we would perceive those as "them".

Francisco
Berlanga



Meet the Team

We write with intention & dwell within tensions. We are artists who have been left without an aim for how to continue engaging with art in the absence of institution. Our goal is to provide a place where we can write about new ideas, old ideas, and bad ideas. We are by no means professional writers, we inhabit a place between the seriousness of academic writing and the frivolity of passing thought. We will often succumb to clichés and trends as they pass us as we all often must.

We hope to present unique thoughts for you to consider. Our writing speaks for no one but ourselves. We do not reduce the similar experiences of others to what we have experienced. We invite you to critically engage with the content, to challenge and be challenged, to test the tensions in question.

Francisco Berlanga is a contemporary artist who studied at Simon Fraser University. He obtained his BFA in Visual Arts with a minor in Interactive Arts and Technology. His practice is based on questioning identity, particularly his connection with his own Mexican culture and how one can inhabit a culture while being partially absent from it. He engages in discourses with his own identity through the creation of traditional Mexican “manualidades” or crafts, his work makes connections between traditional Mexican aesthetics and contemporary visual language. His practice engages with concepts of inaccessibility and the role memory and language can play when someone is distanced from their own culture. He attempts to bridge the gaps between his personal and cultural identities by forcing connections between them and by trying to understand the limitations that these identities impose upon each other.



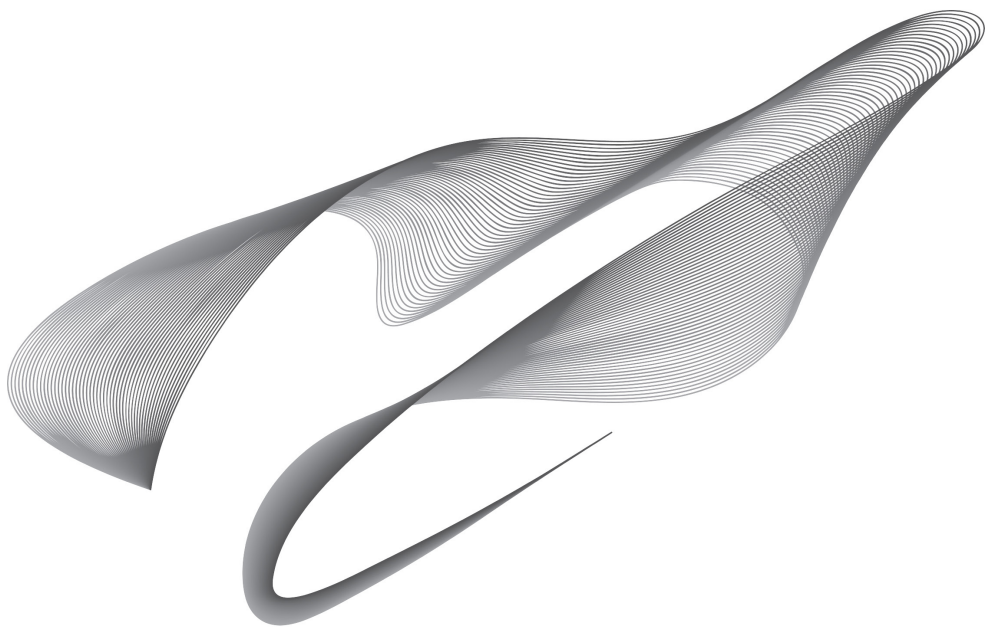
Natalie
Chan

Natalie Chan recently completed her BFA in Visual Arts at Simon Fraser University. Her practice often focuses on the relational aspects of people & places, as well as the inner turmoils & complexities of the human condition. In the creation of her works, she aims to highlight the ideas of reflection, healing, and reconciliation as tangible possibilities in each encounter. Her latest interests include learning how to tattoo, in understanding both the technical skills & intimate relation between artist and the livelihood of their canvas.



Opal
Mclean

Mclean is best described as the “selfish artist” meaning her practice entirely revolves around herself. Her work often relates back to a mental psyche that cannot be described by words alone. Instead, it can be described by an action. A reference to a state of being or a performance that lends to the way her brain functions. This manifestation and documentation of different processes becomes her tool to relate to the outside world. Her own existence comes into question in a way that so many experience in their own daily life. This experience becomes a social, cultural, and political connection to her projects. Her work becomes both alienating but connecting in a shared experience that translates through different media.



We put out new issues every month with a different topic.

We are always looking for submissions and opportunities to collaborate so check out our social medias.

on instagram:
@withintensions

or email us at:
within.tensions@gmail.com

If you want more information, feel free to contact us.

Our next issue will be on the topic of “Inaccessibility” and submissions are now open.

See you next month!

Acknowledgements

Withintensions would not have been possible without the works of Francisco Berlanga, Aidan Branch, Sylvia Burtenshaw, Natalie Chan, Erica Lapadat-Janzen, Opal Mclean, Victoria Mulja, Audrey Shiu, and Vapourwave.Cage

We would also like to thank Francisco Berlanga for his design and social media contributions, Natalie Chan for her assistance in coordinating and Opal Mclean for her editorial work.

We are excited to share our future works with you and we hope to provide more opportunities for artists alike.

